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Acculturation and resilience of immigrant-origin youth: Do their school experiences reflect nonimmigrants’ “native supremacy”?

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Abstract

The successful integration of immigrant-origin youth is a highly important issue for multiple stakeholders in many countries. It has important benefits both to countries of destination and countries of origin, as well as to immigrants and nonimmigrants. In this article, I examine immigrant-youth adaptation through the lens of a recently developed resilience model integrating acculturation and social psychological influences on adaptation. Who among immigrant-origin youth adapt well, academically, and socially, in the Greek school context? What is the role of acculturation in immigrant youth resilience? These questions are addressed using scientific evidence drawn from the Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA) project, a three-cohort, three-wave longitudinal project on immigrant-origin youth adaptation conducted in Greece, as well as from the international literature. Following an anti-racist research approach to understanding the AstRA findings, I will argue that the lived school experiences of immigrant-origin youth may be a reflection of societal-level xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes. Such systemic and structural racism is the key determinant of the difficulties they face in their adaptation. The findings presented reveal the need to promote an equitable and inclusive education that will be beneficial for all students promoting their well-being, and their sense of belonging to school and society.

Keywords: immigrant; adolescents; resilience; acculturation; native supremacy

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Introduction

In recent years, globalization has resulted in international migration reaching unprecedented levels. Many countries have seen a sharp increase in the number of immigrants, including asylum-seekers, entering their territories, often overwhelming their resources. As a result, millions of people currently live in countries other than the country where either they or their parents were born. They may have voluntarily migrated to seek a better future or may have been forcibly displaced, fleeing war, genocide and other atrocities, famine, natural disasters, or the results of climate change.

According to the International Organization for Migration, the number of immigrants living in European and Asian countries has steadily increased since 2005 (Pew Research Center, 2022). In 2020, an estimated 86.7 million lived in Europe, and 85.6 million in Asia. In Oceania, which includes Australia, New Zealand, and various Pacific Island nations and territories, 21.4% of all residents are immigrants. North America is second after Oceania, with immigrants making up 15.7% of the population. In Europe, immigrants account for 11.6% of the population (Pew Research Center, 2022). Young immigrants constitute, particularly in

Western countries, one of the fastest-growing sectors of the population. In total, approximately 14.0 percent of the total migrant population is below the age of 19 years (UNICEF, 2020).

Migration flows are profoundly changing the composition and the face of receiving societies, which are becoming socially, culturally, and linguistically increasingly more diverse. Immigrants’ successful integration has important benefits both to countries of destination and countries of origin, as well as to immigrants and nonimmigrants, alike. For example, considering the increasing life expectancies and decreasing birth rates in receiving nations, immigrants have become an important force in the economies of receiving nations. In many Western countries, nonimmigrant senior citizens’ retirement pensions partly depend on the economic contribution of immigrants.

The European Commission defines integration as “a two-way process based on reciprocity of rights and obligations of third countries’ nationals and host societies that foresee the immigrant full participation” (COM, 2003: 336). This holistic approach targets all dimensions of integration (economic, social, and political rights, cultural and religious diversity, citizenship, and participation). Thus, immigrant integration supports immigrants in the fulfillment of their potential and ensures their long-term social, economic, and political participation in society. Significantly, promoting immigrants’ successful integration becomes imperative for ensuring democratic, inclusive, and socially cohesive receiving societies.

Migration is a multisystem social phenomenon that presents challenges and threatens to destabilize not only the individuals

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migrating, but also immigrant-receiving societies, as well as immigrants' proximal contexts, such as their neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools (Motti-Stefanidi, 2023). All these interacting systems, including immigrants and nonimmigrants, need to adapt to a new reality created by the intermingling and coexistence of people who may have very different cultural values and traditions. The contact between ethnic groups in the context of migration results in cultural changes both in immigrant and nonimmigrant individuals, albeit to a lesser degree in the latter (Berry & Sam, 2016). This process, known as acculturation, is both created by and is creating culture (Ferguson et al., 2023).

How well receiving nations integrate immigrant children and youth is often considered a yardstick of their success in addressing these challenges and integrating their immigrants. The defining test for how well immigrants are integrated into a receiving nation is to assess how well their children are doing.

Immigrant youth face, in addition to acculturative challenges, the developmental challenges of their time and age. They often face these challenges in the context of widespread prejudice and discrimination (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Despite these challenges, most immigrant-origin youth after an initial period in the new country, adapt to their new reality and do well. However, significant diversity in the quality of immigrant-origin youth adaptation has been reported. Some exhibit resilient adaptation whereas others falter.

This paper addresses two key questions. First, who among immigrant youth adapt well despite the adversities they may experience, and second, what is the role of acculturation for immigrant youth resilience? To address these questions, I draw scientific evidence from the Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (AStRA) project, a large, three-cohort, three-wave longitudinal project conducted in Greece (Motti-Stefanidi, 2014, 2019), as well as from the international literature on immigrant-origin youth adaptation.

The focus of this paper will be on resilience in the school context. Schools are an important social context for all youth and contribute to their development and learning. Schools also contribute to the acculturation of all youth since they provide a context where youth learn how to navigate between cultures. However, they contribute more to the acculturation to the national culture of immigrant youth since those individuals are exposed to the national culture mostly at school and to their ethnic culture at home, whereas nonimmigrant youth are exposed both at home and at school to the national culture. (Berry et al., 2006; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010).

The paper has the following sections. First, the meaning of the usage of terms like "immigrant" and "immigrant-origin", when referring to individuals born and raised in the receiving society, is discussed. Second, key concepts and principles of a recently developed integrative framework for understanding immigrant-origin youth resilience are presented. This conceptual model provides criteria for judging positive adaptation among immigrant-origin youth and places their adaptation in nested context. Third, the AStRA project will be briefly introduced. The AStRA project data were collected in youth's schools, which, together with other proximal contexts (family, neighborhood etc.), are nested in the larger society. Fourth, the Greek migration context is presented. Quantitative and qualitative international and national data suggest that Greece is an unwelcoming and assimilatory environment for immigrant-origin individuals. A key argument in this paper is that data on immigrant-origin youth's adaptation collected in schools reflect the xenophobic and assimilatory tendencies of Greek society. The next two sections of

the paper include evidence, based on AStRA project data, first, as to who among immigrant-origin youth adapt well, academically, and socially, in the Greek school context, and second, as to what the role of acculturation is for immigrant youth resilience. Next, the implications of these findings for the formation and integration of immigrant-origin youth's personal, ethnic, and national identities are presented. Finally, social, and educational policy implications of the results are discussed.

Immigrant and immigrant-origin youth: A note on terminology

In this project, we use the term "immigrant-origin youth" even though most participants were born in Greece and have not themselves migrated. Thus, immigrant-origin youth refers to young people who either migrated themselves (first-generation immigrants) or who were born in the host country to immigrant parents (second-generation immigrants). The terms first- and second-generation immigrants are widely used by international authorities. For example, OECD defines immigrant individuals as those who are either foreign-born or native-born but have two foreign-born parents (OECD, 2018). The use of the terms: "immigrant", "youth of immigrant background" and "immigrant-origin youth", is also widespread in the European scientific literature. A content analysis of the abstracts of studies on the adaptation of immigrant-origin youth, conducted over the past decade in North American and European countries, revealed that in most European countries, including Greece, the discourse is mainly framed in terms of "immigrant or ethnic" versus "native or national" (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021).

However, these terms, when referring to youth born in the receiving society, refer to a socially constructed category that reinforces racialized conceptions of belonging and a homogeneous immigrant-origin. Thus, these terms mischaracterize immigrants as a single group with uniform lived experiences set apart from the essentialized, nonimmigrant national group (Moffitt & Juang, 2019). It is noteworthy that since minority group scientists remain underrepresented in academic research, most of the studies on individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation are conducted by ethnic majority nonimmigrant researchers, who are in a position of relative power, and often perpetuate situated meaning (Spencer & Swanson, 2013; Syed, 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2022).

Group labels hold discursive power. Therefore, this terminology relating to exclusionary notions of national identity and to who belongs in a certain national context (Moffitt & Juang, 2019; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021), needs to be revised towards an accurate, more inclusive one. Presently, most youth of immigrant descent living in Greece, whether first or second generation, do not have Greek citizenship, which is possible but difficult to acquire. They are minority groups of immigrant descent which differentiates them from other minority groups in Greece, such as the Roma, who are Greek citizens. In what concerns the different ethnic groups of immigrant descent, analyses of the AStRA data reveal few differences in terms of the quality of youth's school adaptation and well-being (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b).

An integrative framework for understanding immigrant-origin youth resilience

The AStRA project is guided by a multilevel risk and resilience framework for understanding individual differences in immigrant-origin youth adaptation, which was influenced by theory from multiple conceptual perspectives. Immigrant-origin youth are like

all youth first and foremost developing individuals. Therefore, the backbone of this integrative framework is based on Masten's resilience developmental model (Masten, 2014). However, immigrant-origin youth also live and grow between at least two cultures in a context that is often replete with prejudice and discrimination. Hence, Berry's acculturation (Berry et al., 2006), and Verkuyten's (2005), social psychological perspectives were integrated into the developmental resilience model. The present model also integrated ideas from García Coll and colleagues' integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children (García Coll et al., 1996).

Resilience refers to pathways and patterns of positive adaptation during, or following, significant risk or adversity (Masten, 2014). Importantly, it is not an attribute of the individual, but it is instead a phenomenon that is inferred based on two fundamental judgments: First, the person must be, or have been, exposed to significant risk or adversity, and second, he/she must be "doing ok" despite the experience of risk or adversity.

Criteria for judging positive adaptation among immigrant-origin youth

This integrative multilevel model on immigrant-origin youth resilience offers criteria for judging positive adaptation, including both developmental and acculturation perspectives (Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Three major criteria for judging immigrant-origin youth's quality of adaptation, are: doing well with respect to (a) age-salient developmental tasks and (b) acculturative tasks, and (c) psychological well-being and mental health.

Immigrant-origin children, like all children, need to face normative developmental tasks. The quality of their adaptation may be judged based on how well they do with respect to these challenges. These tasks reflect the expectations and standards for behavior and achievement that parents, teachers, and society set for them, and that they themselves usually come to share (Masten, 2014). Examples are academic achievement, being accepted (not being rejected) by peers, having close friends, exhibiting positive conduct, exerting self-regulation and establishing a cohesive, integrated, and multifaceted sense of identity (Masten, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018; Sroufe et al., 2005).

However, immigrant-origin youth live and grow between at least two cultures. Their culture of origin is mainly represented by their family, and the national culture is mainly represented by their school. They need to learn how to make sense of, navigate between, and bridge their different worlds (Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Thus, they are faced with acculturative challenges as they address developmental tasks.

A key criterion for judging how well they are doing with respect to acculturative challenges is the development of a bicultural orientation, which includes learning and maintaining aspects of one's ethnic culture and adopting aspects of the national culture (Berry et al., 2006; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Being bicultural is linked to better long-term adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and psychological well-being, than having one culture, whether the ethnic or the host (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). However, in countries, such as is the case in several European countries, including Greece, that expect immigrant-origin people to assimilate and to shed their own culture, a higher orientation towards the national culture is linked with positive adaptation outcomes (e.g., Makarova & Birman, 2016; Schachner et al., 2017).

A related criterion for judging whether immigrant-origin youth are well-adapted concerns the development of strong and secure ethnic and national identities, which is an aspect of acculturation

(Phinney et al., 2001). These concepts are multidimensional and developmental in nature (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2023). Ethnic identity focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group or culture, whereas national identity refers to the subjective sense of belonging to the national culture. The development of an integrated identity, that is, the combination of strong ethnic and national identities is considered an important index of positive adaptation (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

In this paper John Berry's theorizing and terminology on acculturation are adopted (Berry et al., 2006). Accordingly, the terms ethnic acculturation and ethnic involvement are used to refer to involvement with youth's ethnic culture (culture of origin). In this respect, the term enculturation is used in the US. Similarly, national acculturation and national involvement are used to refer to involvement with the receiving culture. In this respect, the term acculturation is used in the US. Thus, the way the term acculturation is used in the US literature refers to a unidimensional construct, which ranges from more to less acculturated, where the more acculturated immigrant is considered to have adopted and learned the national culture (see Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Following Berry's perspective, acculturation in this paper is considered to have two dimensions (a) adoption of the characteristics of the receiving culture (national acculturation); (b) learning and maintaining the characteristics of the ethnic culture (ethnic acculturation) (also see Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021).

Finally, an additional index for judging the quality of immigrant-origin youth adaptation is their internal psychological functioning and mental health, which is evaluated mainly by indices of perceived psychological well-being versus distress (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). The presence of self-esteem and life satisfaction and the absence of emotional symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, are common markers of psychological well-being used by developmental and acculturation researchers (Berry et al., 2006; Masten, 2014).

Influences on immigrant youth adaptation

Significant diversity is observed in immigrant youth adaptation (Masten et al., 2012). Since immigrant-origin youth, like all youth, are developing organisms, to account for individual differences in their adaptation, it is important to use a developmental lens and, thus, to examine it in developmental context. Normative developmental processes (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional), as well as the normative socioecological contexts (e.g., family, school, neighborhood) in which their lives are embedded, contribute to their adaptation.

Culture is also a significant influence on, and a normative process for, all youth's development and contributes to individual differences in their adaptation (Causadias, 2013; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Juang et al. (2012) in their model of culture in relation to self, family, and value systems, flipped Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and placed culture in the center, radiating out to influence, in addition to the individual, all the microsystems in their proximal context. However, culture often is seen as being salient only for individuals belonging to minority groups (Causadias, 2013). Culture is not recognized as an important influence on the development and adaptation of nonimmigrant native-descent youth. In countries, like Greece, with relatively little ethnic diversity, nonimmigrant youth may take for granted their ethnicity and cultural heritage, since their ethnic group is often experienced as synonymous with the nation (see Schwartz et al., 2018). Furthermore, acculturation, in addition to being an outcome, is also a significant influence on immigrant individuals' adaptation

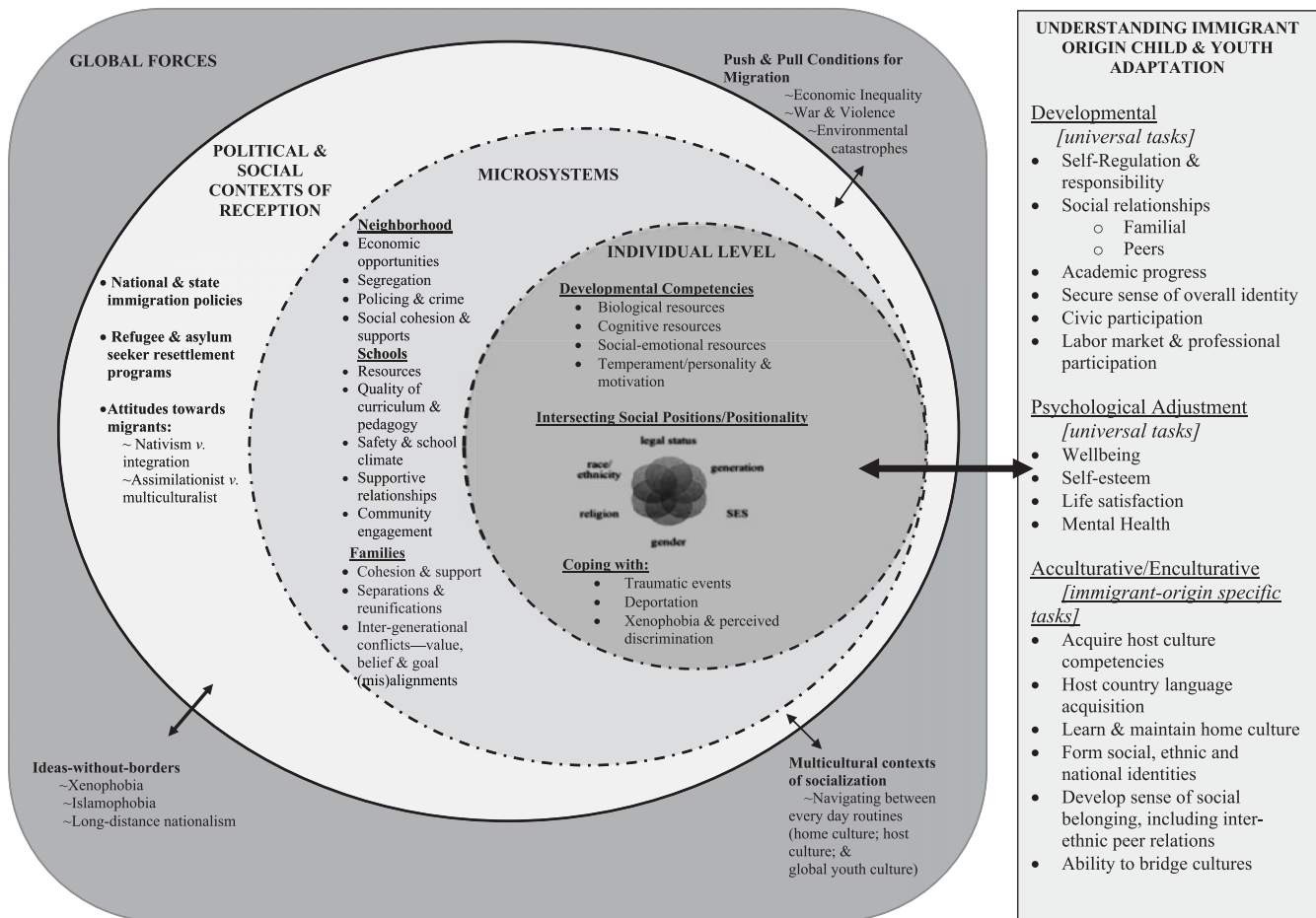


Figure 1. Integrative risk and resilience model for the adaptation of immigrant-origin children and youth.

Source: "Suarez-Orozco, C., Motti-Stefanidi, F., Marks, A.K., & Katsiaficas, D. (2018). An integrative risk and resilience model for understanding the development and adaptation of immigrant origin children and youth. *American Psychologist*."

with respect to developmental tasks and psychological well-being (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2006; Berry et al., 2006).

Finally, immigrant status, and related social variables, such as prejudice and discrimination because of one's ethnicity (Marks et al., 2015), also are expected to contribute to how well immigrant-origin youth adapt. Thus, to understand why some immigrant-origin youth do well whereas others falter, their adaptation needs to be examined in developmental and acculturative contexts, taking into account multiple levels of context and including social psychological influences.

The integrative conceptual model includes four levels of influence which are nested (see Figure 1). They have profound implications for immigrant-origin youth adaptation, contributing independently, or in interaction with each other, to individual differences in their adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Furthermore, influences stemming from each of these different levels may function either as risks or as resources for their adaptation (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

Starting from the outmost layer, the model (Figure 1) includes the influence on youths' adaptation of (a) Global forces, which include push-and-pull conditions for migration, such as economic hardship, war, terrorism, political upheavals even without declared war, extreme climate change patterns which may render

an area uninhabitable, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, which motivate people to migrate to places where they will have more opportunities and will feel safer. (b) Political and social contexts of reception: cultural beliefs, social representations, attitudes towards the presence of immigrants and immigrant-origin people in the country, and ideologies, policies, and programs that shape resettlement; (c) Microsystems: refer to youths' proximal contexts and to their interpersonal interactions with family, peers, and teachers in these contexts, affecting both their development and their acculturation; (d) Individual-level attributes, such as self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulation, cognitive functioning, etc.

Immigrants and immigrant-descent individuals who live in societies that have developed a multicultural ideology and are prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g., education, health, labor) to better meet the needs of all ethnic groups living together, are expected to be better adapted than immigrants who live in societies that are negative towards their presence in the country (Berry & Sam, 2016). Furthermore, immigrants whose lives are embedded in proximal contexts that are prepared to accommodate their presence would be expected to be better adapted than their counterparts whose proximal contexts do not address their needs. Finally, immigrants' individual differences and personal resources, such as a good cognitive capacity, high self-efficacy

Table 1. AStRA project adaptation indices

Developmental tasks	Acculturative tasks	Psychological well-being mental health
Academic achievement	National acculturation	Self-esteem
School engagement	Ethnic acculturation	Self-efficacy
Absenteeism (reversed)	National identity	Symptoms of depression (reversed)
Conduct problems (reversed)	Ethnic identity	Emotional symptoms (reversed)
Peer likeability		
Personal identity		

beliefs, optimism, hopefulness, or spirituality may contribute to how they make sense of, and react to experiences, and, thus, to their adaptation (Ferguson et al., 2023; Masten, 2014; McBride Murry et al., 2018). Societal-level influences often have an indirect impact on youths by filtering through their proximal contexts (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

Initially, we argued that no precedence was given in this integrative resilience model either to the individual as sole agent, or to society as sole determinant of individual differences in immigrant-origin youth's adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a, 2012b). Instead, giving equal weight to the individual and society, we argued that sociocultural circumstances and structures, along with human agency, play a central role in the adaptive processes that may lead to the successful adaptation of immigrant-origin youth. However, giving equal weight to the role of society and the individual undermines the impact that societal systems of racism and oppression, and the resulting social inequities, have in this respect.

The concepts and principles of this model (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018) are appropriate to organize and examine extant evidence on immigrant youth adaptation through the lens of anti-racism research (Wray-Lake et al., 2022). According to this model, resilience is not considered to be an attribute of the individual. Instead, resilience refers to a phenomenon of positive adaptation despite experiences of risk and adversity, that can be primarily explained by influences stemming from individuals' proximal and societal contexts. The influence of individual-level characteristics is also included in the model. However, a lesser role is attributed to its influence, compared to the influence of context, and immigrant individuals are not considered to be responsible for conditions and experiences that result from systems of racism and oppression (Masten, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). In this line, Ferguson et al. (2023), taking an anti-racist approach to acculturation and psychopathology, also acknowledge the contribution of individual differences and individual-level attributes in the way acculturation is experienced, embraced, and/or resisted.

Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation project (AStRA project)

The AStRA project is a large, three-cohort, three-wave longitudinal project on immigrant-origin youth adaptation. The project was framed based on Motti-Stefanidi et al.'s (2012c) initial three-level integrative model for conceptualizing immigrant-origin-youth resilience. The AStRA project examines the adaptation and well-being of immigrant-origin youth, and of their nonimmigrant classmates, living in the extended Athens area. Three cohorts of 3400 adolescent middle school students, nested in over 150 classrooms in 40 schools, were compared. Four ethnic groups were included in these studies: (a) immigrant-origin youth from Albania whose parents are economic immigrants; (b) Pontic-Greeks, who are immigrants of the Diaspora of Greek origin from former Soviet

Union countries; (c) immigrant-origin youth from different, mostly Eastern European, countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania), or former states of the Soviet Union (e.g., Russia, Moldavia) who are also economic immigrants; (d) youth of Greek-descent born to Greek parents.

Participants were in the first year of middle school (mean age = 12 years) at Wave 1 and were followed through middle school for the three consecutive years. Longitudinal data on the first cohort (C1) were collected before the Greek Economic Recession (2005–2007); data on the second cohort (C2) were collected during a period in which the economic crisis was in full swing (2013–2015). Wave 1 data on the third cohort (C3) started being collected during the pandemic COVID-19 (2020–2023).

Multiple domains of adaptation and well-being, as well as a significant number of potential risks and resources for adaptation, were repeatedly assessed over a three-year period, using multiple methods and informants. Table 1 presents the adaptation indices from the AStRA studies that were included in this paper. This design allows the study of the dynamic covariation over time of risks, resources, and/or adaptation outcomes. Furthermore, the data were collected in classrooms that varied with respect to the group that was the numerical majority (immigrant-origins ranged from 20 to 100%), which allows a multiple-levels-of-analysis perspective on adaptation.

The Greek migration context

Greece is a southeastern European country, a member of the European Union and the Eurozone. For the first half of the twentieth century, many Greeks emigrated to other countries, but in the early 1990s, Greece became an immigrant-receiving country. Today, 12.5% of the population in Greece is of immigrant descent (OECD, 2020).

In Greece, as throughout Europe (Phalet et al., 2015), immigrant-origin families often face widespread ethnic prejudice and discrimination (Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). Greek people have generally negative attitudes towards the presence of immigrants, with 60% of Greek citizens indicating that they view immigrants unfavorably (see Marks et al., 2018). According to a joint OECD and EU report (2015), 35% of immigrants report feeling discriminated against, which ranks Greece among the highest in terms of immigrants' perceived discrimination.

Greece scores 46 on the 100-point Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) scale, which is 4 points below the international average. Greece's approach to integration is classified by MIPEX as 'Equality on Paper', one level above the worst MIPEX integration category. Immigrants to Greece enjoy fewer rights and fewer opportunities to integrate than in most MIPEX countries (Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2020). The country's integration approach encourages the Greek public to see immigrants as foreigners and not as equal neighbors or as fellow citizens.

Children born in Greece to immigrant, foreign-born parents do not automatically receive Greek citizenship. A law, passed in 2015 by the Greek Parliament (4332/2015), made it possible for these children to acquire Greek citizenship if they fulfill the following criteria: 1) the child must be enrolled in the first grade of a Greek elementary school; 2) at least one of its parents must have been a lawful resident of Greece for five consecutive years at the time the child was born. When these criteria are fulfilled, both parents need to file a declaration petition on behalf of their child to the municipality where they reside. This law partially addresses the problem that children of immigrant parents born and raised in Greece, who speak Greek, and often have few or even no ties to the country of origin of their parents, are not recognized as Greeks and are not granted the same rights as children born to Greek parents. However, the naturalization process is still complicated and raises obstacles as to who among children born in Greece is entitled to apply for and be granted Greek citizenship.

The acculturation expectations of Greeks are that immigrants assimilate into Greek society. This means Greeks mostly prefer that immigrants adopt the national culture and shed their ethnic culture. However, this expectation is largely limited to Greek education, competence in the Greek language, and contribution to the economy, leaving out private-domain cultural elements (Sapountzis et al., 2013; Chrysochoou & Lyons, 2011; Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017).

In an interesting qualitative study where the representations of citizenship held by both individuals of immigrant origin and Greek citizens were examined, the results revealed that Greeks construct citizenship in essentialist ethnic terms as something acquired through ancestry and blood relations (Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017). Culture was present in both immigrants' and Greeks' discourses regarding citizenship, but its use by Greek participants set assimilatory standards that required immigrants to think, feel and behave like Greek nonimmigrant-descent people. Immigrants did not have the same perception.

As was previously mentioned, Greek-descent nonimmigrants, who represent the vast majority of the population in the country, often consider their ethnic group as synonymous with the nation. They believe that they ought to have more privileges and entitlements as well as priority vis-a-vis immigrants, especially whenever allocation of resources is at stake (e.g., rights, jobs, public services, salaries, territory, etc.) (Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017). Native dominance and superiority, and subordination of immigrant-origin individuals, are reenacted across institutions and social settings (Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017). This structural privilege is referred to as "native supremacy" (Di Masso et al., 2014).

Following an anti-racist research approach to understanding the AStRA findings (Wray-Lake et al., 2022), I will argue in the next sections of the paper that the results of the AStRA project, which are based on school-level data, reflect the structural privilege of "native supremacy" views in Greece. Thus, the lived school experiences of immigrant-origin youth may reflect societal-level xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes. Such systemic and structural racism – in the wider sense of the term – is the key determinant of the difficulties they face in their adaptation.

Immigrant-origin youth acculturation and resilience

In this section, I examine and discuss evidence linking immigrant-origin youth acculturation and resilience based on findings from the Greek AStRA project as well as from the international literature on individual differences in immigrant youth adaptation. The

results are organized around the integrative model on immigrant-origin youth resilience (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012a; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Next, the question "who among immigrant-origin youth adapt well, academically, and socially, in the Greek school context" is addressed. In the following subsection, the question "what is the role of acculturation for immigrant youth resilience" is examined.

Longitudinal links between acculturation, development, and psychological well-being

Adaptation with respect to acculturative and developmental tasks and psychological well-being, which are key indices of the quality of adaptation among immigrant-origin youth, are expected to be interrelated concurrently and over time. The predominant acculturation conceptual models conceive of acculturation as a predictor of how well youth will do with respect to developmental tasks and to their psychological well-being (e.g., Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006; Berry et al., 2006). They do not include in the theorizing the hypothesis that adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and psychological well-being may also have an impact over time on immigrant-origin youth's acculturation. Similarly, a recent acculturation model proposed by Ferguson et al. (2023), guided by a developmental psychopathology perspective and emphasizing the role of culture, also proposes that acculturation experiences (e.g., structural racism) are predisposing factors for acculturation orientations and processes (e.g., adoption of national vs. ethnic acculturation), which in turn are considered to be the mechanisms that shape developmental outcomes (e.g., school engagement) leading to adaptation or maladaptation (e.g., academic performance). The opposite direction from development to acculturation is not included in these conceptual models.

The predicted path from acculturation to development was empirically tested in a seminal cross-sectional study, the International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth project, conducted in 13 countries from an acculturation perspective, on 5366 immigrant youth, aged 13 to 18 years (Berry et al., 2006). Key findings were that immigrant youth who developed competencies in both the ethnic and national cultures did better with respect to different developmental tasks but not with respect to psychological well-being. Higher ethnic acculturation was linked to better psychological well-being, and adaptation with respect to developmental tasks, although the effect was stronger for the former.

Similarly, longitudinal developmental studies have shown that the acquisition of acculturative tasks may precede the acquisition of developmental tasks (e.g., Reitz et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). For example, in a longitudinal study of recently arrived young adolescents from five sending origins in the United States, competence in English (a key acculturative task) was essential for their academic performance (a key developmental task) (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Thus, results from both acculturation and developmental studies suggest that the acquisition of acculturative tasks may function over time as a resource for immigrant-origin youth's achievement of developmental tasks.

However, according to developmental science conceptual models, including the integrative model for understanding immigrant youth resilience (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018), the direction of influence between adaptation indices is expected to be reciprocal and probabilistic over time (Cicchetti, 2023; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002; Masten & Kalstabakken, 2018; Sroufe et al., 2005). To understand the causal link between these adaptation domains, complex dynamic models,

that include bidirectional influences and progressive effects within and across domains of adaptation over time, are required (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002; Masten & Kalstabakken, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi, 2019). For example, cascade effects, in which positive (or negative) adaptation in one domain spreads to influence adjustment in one or more other domains over time, may alter the course of development (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016), as well as the course of immigrant youths' acculturation (Motti-Stefanidi, 2019; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2023).

To test the hypothesis that the direction of effects between acculturative tasks, developmental tasks, and psychological well-being is reciprocal and probabilistic over time (Motti-Stefanidi, 2019), we examined, based on data from the AStRA project, the longitudinal interplay between, on the one hand, different aspects of immigrant-origin youth adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and, on the other, their national and ethnic acculturation. In general, results suggest that the direction of effects depends on the domain of adaptation under study. Whereas academic-related outcomes, which are developmental tasks, predict over time changes in immigrant-origin youth's national and ethnic acculturation, their ethnic and national acculturation predict over time changes in the degree to which they are liked and accepted by peers, which is a developmental task. These findings reveal who among immigrant-origin youth adapt well, academically, and socially, in the Greek school context. Together, they paint a challenging social context that often presents opposing demands, that immigrant-origin youth must navigate, contend with, and adjust to.

Academic achievement and acculturation: The first set of analyses concerns the longitudinal interplay between acculturation and different indices linked to academic achievement (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2023). As was already mentioned, schools are a key acculturative context for immigrant-origin youth. They introduce them to the national culture since at home they are more often exposed to the ethnic culture. Thus, they contribute both to their development and national acculturation. Indices of positive school adjustment are doing well enough in school, which means receiving grades that are comparable to the normative performance of nonimmigrant students, and not dropping out of school early (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018).

Results from the AStRA project revealed that during middle school immigrant-origin youth in Greece do academically significantly less well and are less engaged in school and in their education compared to their nonimmigrant Greek counterparts (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b; Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2017; Motti-Stefanidi, 2014). Furthermore, it was found that even though both groups present a decrease in academic achievement and school engagement over the middle school years (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b), immigrant-origin students present a steeper decrease, particularly, in their school engagement compared to their nonimmigrant classmates (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2015).

Next, the longitudinal link between academic achievement and school engagement was tested. It was hypothesized, based on the integrative model on immigrant youth resilience, that this link would be reciprocal and probabilistic over time (Cicchetti, 2023; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002; Masten & Kalstabakken, 2018) but, based on the engagement hypothesis (Fredricks et al., 2004), it was expected that the path from school engagement to academic achievement would be stronger. Both paths were significant but, against expectations, the path from academic achievement to school engagement was significantly stronger. Lower academic

achievement led immigrant-origin youth over time to becoming more disengaged from their school and education (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2015).

This finding led to the argument that if immigrant-origin youth disengage from their school, which represents the national culture, they may also distance themselves from that culture and in parallel become more involved with their ethnic culture (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2023). Two developmental cascades both testing the path from academic achievement to school engagement and then, one the path from school engagement to national acculturation, and the other to ethnic acculturation, proved this hypothesis to be correct. Lower academic achievement among immigrant-origin youth led over time to lower school engagement, which in turn led later to lower involvement with the national, and higher involvement with the ethnic, cultures. This is a negative acculturation outcome, since the optimal goal for their acculturation is that immigrant-origin youth become bicultural (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013), and in countries like Greece, that expect immigrant-origin people to assimilate (Pavlopoulos & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017), a significant goal is that they develop a higher orientation towards the national culture (e.g., Makarova & Birman, 2016; Schachner et al., 2017). These results reveal that the academic achievement of immigrant-origin youth, which is a developmental task, is during middle school a predictor of their acculturation. The opposite path from acculturative to developmental tasks was tested but was not significant.

Examined through the lens of the model for understanding immigrant youth resilience (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018), and taking an anti-racist approach to interpreting the results, the low academic achievement of immigrant-origin youth, compared to that of their nonimmigrant classmates, cannot be attributed to individuals' characteristics (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2023; Wray-Lake et al., 2022). Instead, school policies and practices create these social inequalities in school achievement. It should be noted that, findings from the AStRA project reveal that together with immigrant status, SES adversity of youth, independently of immigrant status (both immigrant origin and Greek nonimmigrant youth), is another unique risk factor for academic achievement, even though being of immigrant origin constitutes a greater risk to academic achievement than having a low SES family (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b). In line with AStRA findings, PISA 2018 found that globally students from high SES families, and students from nonimmigrant families, outperformed students from low SES families, and students from immigrant families.

According to MIPEX (2020), little is done by the Greek State to address the diverse needs of immigrant-origin pupils, teachers, and schools. It should be noted that curricula and educational programs are developed by the Ministry of Education and are implemented in the schools. The Greek school context is characterized by a lack of (a) meaningful and relevant curricula related to immigrant-origin students' own interests and goals, (b) educational support based on immigrant-origin students', as well as on low SES nonimmigrant students', needs (c) programs that foster equality and inclusion and/or value cultural pluralism (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b).

Peer relations and acculturation: The second set of analyses examining the direction of effects between acculturation and development, focused on the longitudinal interplay between indices of peer relations and acculturation. Similarly, to academic achievement and school engagement, positive peer relations are important both for immigrant-origin youth development and

acculturation (Motti-Stefanidi, 2018). Getting along with peers and having friends, independently of their immigrant or ethnic status, predicts better developmental outcomes, and positive mental health, concurrently and over time. (Rubin et al., 2015). Furthermore, being accepted (and not being rejected) by both intra- and interethnic peers is an important part of immigrant-origin youth experience in the receiving society and for their acculturation (Titzmann, 2014).

AStra data revealed that immigrant-origin youth in newly formed classrooms with an equal number of immigrant-origin and nonimmigrant students were less accepted and more rejected by their classmates (Asendorpf & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). However, as the proportion of immigrant-origin students in a classroom increased, immigrant-origin students were more accepted and tended to be less rejected. In newly formed classrooms the classroom context mattered more than immigrant status for immigrant youth's acceptance and rejection by classmates. Over time, immigrants' initial disadvantage in terms of being more rejected than Greeks completely disappeared, whereas Greeks did not change in their level of being rejected. This finding held independently of immigrant composition of the classroom. Acceptance of immigrants increased particularly in classrooms with few immigrants.

Next, the longitudinal interplay between acceptance/rejection and different adaptation indices was tested, separately for immigrant-origin and their nonimmigrant classmates. Results revealed that being accepted by Greek peers, which was assessed in the classrooms through peer sociometrics, predicted fewer symptoms of depression and higher self-esteem over time (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020), as well as lower perceptions of ethnic discrimination against the self (Reitz et al., 2016). The latter finding is important because perceived discrimination is itself linked to a host of negative developmental, acculturative, and mental health outcomes (Marks et al., 2015). Being accepted by other immigrant-origin peers had no effect on immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being.

The finding that being accepted by Greek, but not by immigrant-origin, peers is linked to more positive outcomes, led to the question of who among immigrant-origin youth is accepted by Greek peers. To address this question the longitudinal interplay between immigrant-origin youth acculturation orientations (national and ethnic acculturation) and their acceptance/rejection by Greek peers was tested (Asendorpf & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018). Immigrant-origin youth who reported higher involvement with the Greek national culture (i.e., higher national acculturation) were better accepted by their Greek peers over time. Higher involvement with the ethnic culture predicted over time higher rejection by Greek peers. Neither immigrant-origin youth's acceptance, nor their rejection, by other immigrant-origin peers, were linked either to their national or ethnic acculturation.

In sum, immigrant-origin youth's national acculturation promotes being accepted and liked by Greek peers (Asendorpf & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). These findings from the AStra project agree with results by Verkuyten et al. (2014) in the Netherlands, who found that immigrant-origin youth high in involvement with the Dutch culture, and low in involvement with the ethnic culture, were liked most by their Dutch counterparts.

Taken together, the AStra results help address the first question, namely who among immigrant-origin youth adapts well, academically, and socially, in the Greek school context. On average, immigrant-origin youth do academically significantly less

well compared to their Greek nonimmigrant classmates. Since the Greek State, which dictates policies and programs to be implemented by schools, does not acknowledge the need to adapt the curriculum and schools do not provide the necessary educational support, immigrant-origin youth are left to their own devices to meet academic demands. Individual and family-level factors may support those immigrant-origin students who do well academically (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012b).

On the other hand, some immigrant-origin students are more accepted by their Greek classmates than others. Those who have adopted the Greek culture, have learned the Greek language, and have shed their own culture are more accepted by Greek classmates, which has a significantly positive impact on their psychological well-being (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020).

The AStra results also reveal that the acculturation orientation (national and ethnic acculturation) of immigrant-origin youth, depending on the domain of adaptation, may be a predictor or a consequence of resilience. In the case of academic performance, acculturation is a consequence of their difficulty in doing well enough academically. They are not supported to do well in school which over time leads them to disengage from their school and education and later to become less involved with the national culture. In the case of social relations, acculturation is a predictor of how well they do socially, especially with Greek classmates, whose acceptance is consequential for immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being. To be accepted by Greek classmates they need to have a high national, and low ethnic, acculturation. Thus, the messages they receive in the school context are contradictory, reflecting the unwelcoming and at the same time assimilatory attitudes of Greek society.

Immigrant-origin youth acculturation and resilience in the context of discrimination

In this section, I examine the role of acculturation for immigrant youth resilience in the context of discrimination. Acculturation often plays a special role in the adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and the psychological well-being of immigrant-origin youth when they report experiencing discrimination because of their ethnicity and minority status (Marks et al., 2015). Immigrant-origin youth live and grow in contexts replete with prejudice and discrimination against them and their ethnic group. Ethnic discrimination refers to a pervasive differential, unfair treatment because of one's ethnic and/or religious affiliation. This treatment is embedded in social structures and institutions (e.g., see Moffitt et al., 2018) and is expressed in everyday life through interpersonal interactions (Yip, 2018). Even though discrimination is a very real experience for minority group members, it is difficult to determine objectively its occurrence in the real world (Taylor et al., 1996). The reason is that discrimination is, at least partly, defined by the attribution of one's negative outcomes to prejudice and discrimination. However, the intention behind such social acts is rarely very clear. Therefore, a distinction has been drawn between objective discrimination and perceived discrimination. Within perceived discrimination, another important distinction is drawn in the social psychological literature between perceived discrimination against one's ethnic group and perceived discrimination against the self (e.g., Bourguignon et al., 2006). The results presented in this paper focus on perceived discrimination against the self, which refers to individuals' perceptions of being treated unfairly due to their ethnicity or immigrant status.

Perceived discrimination against the self has been shown to have deleterious consequences on immigrant youth's academic outcomes, conduct, as well as on their mental health and psychological well-being. These consequences tend to persist over time (Marks et al., 2015). Despite antidiscrimination laws passed in Europe, ethnic discrimination persists in European countries (e.g., Phalet et al., 2015).

Links between discrimination, developmental tasks, and psychological well-being

Based on AStRA data, we initially examined the direction of effects between, on the one hand, perceived ethnic discrimination against the self and, on the other, immigrant-origin youth's adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and psychological well-being (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022). We found that higher perceived ethnic discrimination predicted over time, after controlling for prior levels of adaptation, decreases in self-efficacy and self-esteem (assessed through self-reports), decreases in school engagement (assessed through teacher reports), and increases in absenteeism (retrieved from school records) (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022). Thus, perceived discrimination is a risk factor for certain domains of immigrant-origin youth adaptation and psychological well-being.

Most studies on the topic assume that discrimination relates to adolescent outcomes unidirectionally. However, based on a key guiding principle of the framework for conceptualizing immigrant-origin youth resilience (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018), the quality of youth's prior adaptation also was expected to influence how they interpret and respond to current challenges (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002; Masten & Kalstabakken, 2018, Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, 2012; Sroufe et al., 2005).

This hypothesis was supported by our findings for some domains of adaptation. The quality of youth's earlier adaptation predicted overtime their perceptions of discrimination against the self. Higher academic achievement (retrieved from school records) and higher school engagement (assessed through teacher reports) predicted over time decreases in perceived ethnic discrimination, whereas more symptoms of depression (assessed through self-reports), predicted overtime increases in perceived ethnic discrimination (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022).

The question that arises from these findings is whether youth with a positive adaptive history construe and make sense of their reality differently compared to youth who are not well adapted (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002), or whether they evoke positive reactions from people and, thus, experience less discrimination (Caspi & Shiner, 2006). Do they perceive less discrimination, or do they experience less discrimination?

The international scientific evidence regarding the direction of effects between perceived discrimination, on the one hand, and adaptation and well-being, on the other, is contradictory and in partial agreement with the AStRA findings. Hou et al. (2015) examined the direction of effects between perceived discrimination against the self and depression. They found that symptoms of depression both predicted, and were predicted overtime by, perceived discrimination. In partial agreement, AStRA project findings showed that whereas symptoms of depression, predicted overtime increases in perceived ethnic discrimination, the latter did not predict over time increases in symptoms of depression. In contrast to AStRA findings, Benner and Kim (2009) found that perceived discrimination predicted negative changes in socioemotional and academic adaptation, but the other direction of effects was not found to be significant.

Acculturation as a protective factor for immigrant youth adaptation in the context of discrimination

Next, we examined the role of acculturation for immigrant youth resilience in the context of discrimination. We addressed the questions of whether and how host and ethnic acculturation, including the formation of ethnic and national identities, protect immigrant-origin youth's school adjustment and psychological well-being when they report being discriminated against due to their ethnicity.

The international literature shows that racial and ethnic identity function as a protective factor against the harmful effects of racial and ethnic discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2003). The evidence on the benefits of ethnic and host acculturation is mixed. Some studies find that adolescents with low involvement with the national culture and high involvement with the ethnic culture are less vulnerable to the negative impact of ethnic discrimination on their psychological well-being (e.g., Umana-Taylor and Updegraff, 2007). However, other studies show the opposite effect (e.g., Deng et al., 2010).

AStRA data revealed that in most cases higher involvement with the national culture and higher national identity protected immigrant-origin youth's school engagement and positive conduct, both of which were teacher-rated, when they reported high ethnic discrimination against the self (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022). Thus, in the context of high self-reported discrimination, immigrant-origin youth who reported high involvement with the national culture and/or high national identity, were according to their teachers more engaged in their school and education, and had better conduct, compared to immigrant-origin youth who reported low engagement with the national culture.

In the opposite direction, the effects of academic achievement, school engagement, and conduct, all three teacher-rated, on discrimination were moderated by ethnic involvement, where low involvement with the ethnic culture together with high school engagement led to lower perceptions of ethnic discrimination. Ethnic identity did not moderate the longitudinal link between discrimination and adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022).

In sum, AStRA findings suggest that the link between immigrant-origin youth perceived discrimination and adaptation is bidirectional. Discrimination often places at risk youth's positive adaptation and well-being, but better-adapted youth often also tend to perceive less discrimination directed against them. The results on the potentially protective role of acculturation in the context of discrimination, confirm the importance that adopting and learning the national culture has for immigrant-origin youth adaptation. They further support the argument that these school-level data reflect the societal-level assimilatory attitudes of nonimmigrants.

Integration of immigrant-origin youth's personal, ethnic and national identities

In this section, I provide further evidence as to who among immigrant-origin youth are well adapted and why. The focus will be on youth's personal, ethnic and national identities, and on their integration. In this challenging, assimilatory, and non-welcoming national context, immigrant-origin youth face another important developmental task, which is the formation of their identity. They need to address the question: who am I? which includes their membership to social groups, such as their ethnic and national groups. Immigrant-origin youth, in particular, are expected to form, first, secure, coherent and integrated personal, ethnic, and

national identities (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), second, an identity as “being both” a member of one’s ethnic group and of the receiving nation (Schwartz et al., 2018; Wiley et al., 2019), and third, they need to integrate the meaning that their belonging to their ethnic group and the receiving nation has for them into their personal identity (Meca et al., 2017). These are indices of positive adaptation (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021).

We tested, using AStRA data, the concurrent and longitudinal links between the exploration of, and commitment to personal, national, and ethnic identities by immigrant-origin youth, separately for exploration and commitment (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021). Three findings stand out. First, results revealed robust positive within-time associations among all three identity domains, at all three-time points, both for exploration and commitment. Immigrant-origin youth who engaged in greater exploration in one of these identity domains, also tended to explore more the other two domains. Similarly, immigrant-origin youth who endorsed higher levels of commitment to one of these identity domains, also tended to commit more to the other two domains. These positive concurrent correlations suggest that personal, national, and ethnic identities are part of a broader self-system (Oyserman et al., 2012).

Second, results revealed longitudinal negative cross-lagged links between national and ethnic identities for both exploration and commitment, indicating that immigrant-origin youth who explore and/or commit more to national Greek identity tend to explore and/or commit less to their ethnic identity the following year, and vice versa. These findings reflect the attitudes of assimilationist receiving societies (Ward and Geeraert, 2016), such as is Greece (Pavlopoulos and Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). In assimilationist societies, immigrants are forced to choose between the national culture and their own culture, resulting in a negative relationship between the two (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). In such a societal context, dual identities, which would be reflected in a positive relation between ethnic and national identities, may be contested by the receiving society, as well as by immigrants’ co-ethnic community (Schwartz et al., 2018; Wiley et al., 2019). Thus, a strong national orientation and identity may be in such countries incompatible with a strong orientation towards, and sense of belonging to, one’s ethnic culture.

Third, ethnic and/or national identity processes seemed largely disconnected from the formation of immigrant-origin youth’s personal identity. In the context of an assimilatory society, ethnic and national identities are incompatible between them (Ward & Geeraert, 2016), but each may also be incompatible with personal identity. In a receiving society that is unwelcoming towards immigrants, immigrant-origin youth’s ethnic identity may not necessarily provide them with a sense of self, purpose, and direction in life (Meca et al., 2017).

How can immigrant-origin youth reconcile in such an unwelcoming and assimilatory context their ethnic identity with their personal identity, which includes future goals that most likely will materialize in the receiving society? Furthermore, even though higher involvement with the Greek culture was shown to lead over time to higher acceptance by Greek peers (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018), their belonging to the receiving nation and, relatedly, their Greekness, are often contested (Triandafyllidou, 2000). Thus, if immigrant-origin youth feel that their ethnic group is negatively regarded by majority peers, and/or if they feel they do not belong to the receiving nation, it becomes difficult for them to harmoniously incorporate aspects of ethnic and national identity into their personal identity (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021).

To summarize, immigrant-origin youth living in Greece face significant structural challenges and barriers. The country is mostly negative towards their presence but still expects them to adopt the host culture and shed their own culture. These structural conditions are reflected in the AStRA school and peer data. No support is offered to them to succeed academically in school which has a negative impact on their national acculturation. On the other hand, peers expect them to adopt the Greek culture and shed their own ethnic culture. Host acculturation and national identity matter for their adaptation particularly in the context of discrimination. Ethnic acculturation and identity either do not matter or play a negative role. The challenges that they face are reflected in their difficulty to integrate their Greek and their ethnic to their personal identities. They are also reflected in the negative link found in AStRA studies between immigrant origins’ host and ethnic acculturation.

Implications of the findings for public and educational policy

The results of the AStRA project, presented in this paper, give significant insights into the issues that need to be addressed by the Greek State and schools to achieve the positive integration of immigrant-origin youth, and to promote the development and well-being of all youth. These insights have important implications for public and educational policy.

As was mentioned earlier, societal-level influences often have an indirect impact on youths by filtering through their proximal contexts (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012c; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Furthermore, in Greece, where the AStRA project was conducted, the State dictates and funds the curriculum, the educational programs and policies, and the support provided to students that need it. Thus, a first, important step in addressing the obstacles to immigrant-origin youth integration, and particularly in addressing the “native supremacy” attitudes of nonimmigrants, is to create public campaigns that demonstrate the contribution of immigrants to receiving societies and the need to promote respect to the diversity and needs of various ethnic groups.

The State needs the mandate from the nonimmigrant population to develop and fund the programs and policies that will promote the positive integration of immigrant-origin youth and that will be beneficial for all youth. Schools need to adopt an equitable education approach, providing the same opportunities and means to all students to achieve their full potential, and at the same time adopt principles of an inclusive education, stressing the need to respect the diversity of the student body. An equitable and inclusive education will be beneficial for all students promoting their psychological well-being, and their sense of belonging to school and society (OECD, 2023).

All youth, independently of whether they are of immigrant descent or are nonimmigrant, experience in their lifetime risks and protective factors, even though the nature of the risks is different and the protective factors correlate with cultural supports and protective factors (Spencer & Swanson, 2013). Thus, schools need to encourage the same positive outcomes for all students even if different methods for accomplishing these outcomes are required. To apply Spencer and Swanson’s (2013) argument to the European context, for nonimmigrant Greek youth, promoting positive adaptation may include adopting strategies for addressing their “native supremacy”.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2023) outlined the following six key steps that will allow

States and schools to promote a holistic approach in advancing equity and inclusion in education.

1. Develop a policy framework on equity and inclusion and embed it in all areas of education policy.
2. Ensure that the education system is flexible and responsive to the needs of students.
3. Include equity and inclusion as principles of both the main resource allocation mechanisms and targeted funding of the education system.
4. Engage all relevant stakeholders in implementing the policy framework in schools and classrooms, strengthening coordination.
5. Prepare and support teachers and school leaders in developing the competencies and knowledge areas for promoting equity and inclusion.
6. Identify students' needs, support them, and monitor their progress.

Last but not least, schools need to promote intercultural competence in both immigrant and nonimmigrant youths through positive and well-planned intergroup contact (Barrett, 2018). In a highly diverse and globalizing world, being able to engage appropriately, effectively, and respectfully in intercultural interactions and dialog with people from other cultural backgrounds are invaluable skills promoting the well-being of individuals and societies.

Conclusion

Demographic shifts related to voluntary migration and refugee crises contribute to the increasing diversity found in receiving societies, communities, and schools. How well they all adapt to this reality will be consequential for building more cohesive and inclusive societies. Societies that value cultural diversity and adopt a multicultural ideology promote the integration and positive adaptation of immigrants and their children (Sam & Berry, 2016). Schools need to implement an equitable and inclusive education, which will be beneficial for all students as well as for society (OECD, 2023). However, as the influx of immigrants started increasing, many receiving societies were not prepared to promote their integration.

The purpose of the paper was to present school-level data on the resilience and acculturation of immigrant-origin youth living in Greece. It was argued that understanding who among these youths does well academically and socially in the school context and the role of acculturation in their adaptation and well-being requires the examination of the socio-political context that shapes the structural conditions in which their development, acculturation, and adaptation take place. School-level data on immigrant-origin youth adaptation can be accounted for by the unwelcoming and assimilatory attitudes of the larger society and by the nonimmigrant population's attitudes of "native supremacy". To promote immigrant-origin youth's integration and positive adaptation, it is essential to address the structural obstacles and prejudice that they are confronted with daily.

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